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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of attendance at a panel featuring gay and lesbian speakers on self-reported measures of individual homophobia. A total of 200 female and 120 male college students enrolled in human sexuality classes were randomly assigned to pretest or no pretest conditions and completed surveys before, after, and one month following the intervention. Cognitive homophobia was assessed by the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men scales. Behavioral homophobia was determined by the Posttest Evaluation Questionnaire. All subjects completed the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale as a formalized check on social desirability response tendencies. It was concluded that: (1) the students' levels of cognitive antigay attitudes decreased following interaction with a gay and lesbian speaker panel; (2) the students' levels of affective homophobic attitudes decreased following participation in this panel; and (3) students did not report a greater willingness to engage in gay positive behaviors following exposure to this panel; (4) one month later, students indicated a slight tendency to engage in fewer gay positive behaviors. The study concluded, therefore, that behavior change did not occur as a result of the panel. (Contains 23 references.) (CK)

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Reducing Homophobia Through Gay and Lesbian Speaker Panels

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Reducing Homophobia Through Gay and Lesbian Speaker Panels

INTRODUCTION

Homophobia, a prejudice that leads to hatred and discrimination toward lesbian and gay people (Hancock, 1986), is pervasive on university and college campuses across the United States. Recent surveys of gay and lesbian students (Berrill, 1990; Herek, 1989) report high rates of violence and harassment on campuses toward gay students. In a review of the literature on hate crimes, Herek (1989) found that "as many as 92% of lesbian women and gay men report that they had been targets of antigay verbal abuse or threats and as many as 24% report physical attacks because of their sexual orientation" (p. 948). Given the prevalence of homophobia on campuses and in communities, it is incumbent upon psychologists, student development professionals, and other human service professionals to take an active role in creating and implementing interventions targeted to reduce homophobia.

Few studies have examined the efficacy of educational and interpersonal interventions designed to reduce homophobia. In a review of the literature, Stevenson (1988) found 13 such studies that used change strategies mostly with college students in human sexuality classes. Some of the interventions included presenting brief seminars emphasizing homosexuality and exposing students to gay and lesbian speaker panels. Among the studies in his review only four addressed the effectiveness of the latter intervention (Anderson, 1981/82; Freeland & Stevenson, 1986; Morin, 1974; Wells, 1989). Croteau and Kusek (1992) reported two additional studies on the efficacy of openly gay and lesbian speakers (Lance, 1987; Pagtolun-An & Clair, 1986). All but one study indicated favorable effects of attitude change.

Before attitudes can be changed, one must consider that different people can express similar attitudes for entirely different reasons and that one person's attitudes toward different social objects may each serve different functions. Using a functional approach, attitudes serve as methods for meeting psychological needs (Katz, 1960).

Herek helped to reintroduce the importance and utility of considering a functional approach in explaining attitudes. He considered the work of Katz (1960) and Smith (1973) and translated their ideas into an a social-psychological theory of antigay prejudice that can be empirically tested (Herek, 1987). Herek (1984) proposed that individuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men meet three major needs: experiential, self-expressive, and defensive. Experiential attitudes help to categorize social reality and mediate one's interpersonal relationships on the basis of one's past interactions with gay people. Self-expressive attitudes express abstract ideological concepts that are tied to one's notion of self and to one's social groups. Defensive attitudes help a person cope with some inner conflict by externalizing the conflict onto gay people.

Experiential attitudes toward gay people are the easiest to challenge and change. Favorable attitudes should become more so as the individual develops positive relationships with gay people. If the experiential attitudes are negative, they can best be changed by creating positive low anxiety interactions with gay people that are incompatible with previous attitudes (Herek, 1986).

Problem Statement

The present study used a Solomon Four-Group Design (Solomon, 1949) to study the effects of a well-structured gay and lesbian speaker panel intervention on self-reported measures of individual homophobia. The subjects, 200 female and 120 male undergraduate students enrolled in human sexuality classes at a large southwestern university, were randomly assigned to pretest or no pretest conditions and were asked to complete surveys before, after, and one month following the intervention.

The dependent variable, homophobia, was assessed in three ways. Cognitive homophobia was measured by the Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980); affective homophobia was assessed by the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (Herek, 1988) scales. Behavioral homophobia was determined by the Posttest Evaluation Questionnaire that was developed specifically for the present study. All subjects completed the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale - Form C (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Reynolds, 1982) as a formalized check on social desirability response tendencies.

Croteau and Kusek (1992) offered several suggestions for improving research in this area. Many of their ideas were incorporated into the present study. They include (a) a solid experimental design (Solomon Four-Group Design) that assessed the effect of pretesting, (b) a large representative sample (n = 320), (c) a standardized intervention (well-structured speaker panel presentation), training of the speakers, and an objective description of the intervention (via transcript), (d) follow-up data to check the stability of the change in attitude scores over time, (e) multiple measures for the dependent variable (homophobia) to improve construct measurement, and (f) a formalized check on social desirability response tendencies.

Using the results of past studies and the theoretical framework articulated by Herek (1984, 1986, 1987), the following hypotheses were evaluated:

1. The students' levels of cognitive antigay attitudes will decrease following interaction with a gay and lesbian speaker panel.
2. The students' levels of affective homophobic attitudes will decrease following participation in a gay and lesbian speaker panel intervention.
3. Students will report a greater willingness to engage in gay positive behaviors following exposure with a gay and lesbian speaker panel.

Treatment Intervention

The speaker panel intervention lasted one hour and was composed of four main speakers including two lesbians and two gay men. Panel members participated in training workshops during which the facilitator reviewed the speaker panel format, provided assistance in selecting appropriate personal narratives, and helped in role-playing the fielding of difficult questions and situations that might occur. A training manual (Reinhardt, 1993) based on the manual used by the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Speakers Bureau of Boston (Blumenfeld, 1992) was provided to all panel members.

The format of the speaker panel included an introduction that helped to set the ground rules and establish the climate and format, personal narratives from each panel member, and a question-and-answer period. These paralleled the three sections suggested by Croteau and Kusek (1992): introduction, personal narratives, and question-and-answer period. The introduction and personal narratives sections were the shortest periods. The majority of the intervention focussed on answering questions from the audience.

There were 20 questions asked during the speaker panel presentation. Topics most asked about included raising or having children (20% of the questions), coming out issues (20% of the questions), relationships/dating/ marriage issues (15% of the questions), negative consequences of homophobia (15% of the questions), and general information about GLB organizations (10% of the questions). One question from each of the following topic areas was asked making up the remaining 20% of the questions: causes of homosexuality, how gays and lesbians are portrayed in the media, religion and homosexuality, and gay and lesbian social entertainment.

RESULTS

Multivariate Analyses

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were approached using a series of multivariate analyses on the three outcome variables (i.e., TIAH, TATL, TATG).

2X2 Factorial MANOVA for the Solomon Four-Group Posttest Data Only. Table 1 presents the total sample and cell means and standard deviations for the dependent variables (i.e., TIAH, TATL, TATG) for the posttest data. Table 2 reports the results from the 2X2 factorial MANOVA for the Solomon Four-Group Design posttest data. The main effect experimental condition accounted for 4.8% of the variance and was statistically significant ($p_{CALC} < .001$). The pretest main effect explained 3.3% of the variance and was statistically significant ($p_{CALC}=.014$). The two-way interaction effect of experimental condition and pretest condition yielded an effect size of 1.3%, but was not statistically significant ($p_{CALC}=.235$).

To "discover" the differences in the multivariate latent variables discriminant analyses were conducted for each of the main effects. Tables 3 through 5 report the discriminant function results for each of the main effects. By squaring the structure coefficients, it was discovered that the experimental condition main effect explained 44.5% of the variance associated with TIAH, 73.3% in TATL, and 92.2% of the variance in TATG, as reported in Table 3.

For the pretest condition main effect, less than .1% of the variance was explained in TIAH, 35.2% was accounted for in TATL, and 26.1% was explained in TATG, as reported in Table 4. For the two-way interaction experimental condition by pretest condition, 92.5% of the variance was accounted for in TIAH, 34.3% was explained in TATL, and 47.5% was accounted for in TATG, as reported in Table 5.

Repeated Measures One-Way MANOVA. Since the same dependent variables (i.e., TIAH, TATL, TATG) were measured on more than one occasion for each subject, a repeated measures design was implemented to identify the variables that contributed to differences between the treatment conditions across time. There are advantages to using the repeated measures design. The design requires a smaller n to find statistical significance when it exists (i.e., has more power against Type II error). Power is function of the size of the true treatment effects, sample size, degree of error variance, and the statistical significance level. In the repeated measures design, variability due to differences between subjects can be eliminated from the experimental error.

Table 6 lists the individual cell means and standard deviations for the three dependent variables for both the pretest and the posttest data. Table 7 shows the results from the repeated measures one-way MANOVA on the two groups that took both the pretest and the posttest. There were 80 subjects each in the experimental and the control groups that completed both testings. The between-subjects effect (experimental condition) explained 13.6% of the variance and was statistically significant ($p_{CALC} < .001$). The within-subjects effects of time and the time-by experimental-condition two-way interaction explained 96.4% and 6.9% of the variance, respectively. The time effect was statistically significant ($p_{CALC}<.001$) and the time-by-experimental-condition interaction effect was also statistically significant ($p_{CALC}=.011$).

PEQ Behavioral Results

To address hypothesis 3, means, standard deviations, and 95 percent confidence intervals were calculated for the 40 subjects in the "pretest" experimental group that completed the pretest, posttest and follow-up PEQ. PEQ results were not included in the main multivariate analyses because 40 experimental subjects did not complete the PEQPR. Table 8 lists the means, standard deviations, and 95 percent confidence intervals for PEQPR, PEQPT,

and PBQFU. The means for PBQPR, PBQPT, and PBQFU were 32.14 (SD = 7.60), 32.18 (SD = 7.96), and 34.55 (SD = 7.27), respectively. There was virtually no change in the means from pretesting to posttesting. There was a small increase in the overall PBQ mean at the one month follow-up.

Follow-up data analyses

All experimental group participants completed the homophobia measures (i.e., IAH, ATL, ATG) one month after the intervention was implemented. Table 9 reports the means, standard deviations, and 95 percent confidence intervals for the posttest and follow-up administrations of the homophobia measures for the total experimental group and separated out by pretest and no pretest groups. By examining the 95 percent confidence intervals one discovers considerable overlap between the posttest and corresponding follow-up confidence intervals. In most cases the mean homophobia scores increased slightly but most increases were modest. There are not statistically significant differences between the posttest homophobia score means and the follow-up means. This indicates that the effects of the speaker panel intervention were maintained over a one month period.

CONCLUSIONS

This section interprets the study's outcomes, considers the implications and limitations of the study, and outlines directions for future research.

Major hypotheses

1. The students' levels of cognitive antigay attitudes will decrease following interaction with a gay and lesbian speaker panel. This hypothesis was supported. Collectively assignment to experimental intervention conditions accounted for 4.8% of the variance in the dependent variables (i.e, IAHPT, ATLPT, and ATGPT) in the 2X2 factorial MANOVA analysis, and 13.6% of the variance for the between-subjects effect (experimental condition) in the repeated measures MANOVA results, as reported in Tables 2 and 7. Collectively, ATL and ATG measured "cognitive antigay attitudes." The discriminant function results reported in Table 3 indicate that TATL accounted for 73.3% of the explained variance in the experimental condition main effect and TATG explained 92.2%.

2. The students' levels of affective homophobic attitudes will decrease following participation in a gay and lesbian speaker panel intervention. This hypothesis was supported. IAH was the dependent variable measuring "affective homophobic attitudes." The discriminant function results reported in Table 3 indicated that 44.5% of the explained variance of the experimental condition main effect was attributable to IAH.

3. Students will report a greater willingness to engage in gay positive behaviors following exposure with a gay and lesbian speaker panel. This hypothesis was not supported. As reported in Table 8, using the PEQ as the dependent variable measuring self-reported propensity to engage in gay positive activities and actions, there were no differences between the pretest and posttest means for the 40 experimental group individuals who completed the PEQ at both administrations.

The one month follow-up group mean for this same group

indicated a slight increase in the overall PBQ scores, indicating a slight tendency to engage in fewer gay positive behaviors. Given the small sample size of these results one must be cautious when interpreting them; however, it seems that behavior change as reflected by PBQ scores did not occur as a result of the panel.

Limitations of the Study

The present research study had a number of limitations that must be considered in explaining the results. First, the generalizability may be limited to college-age undergraduate students. This sample contained mostly juniors and seniors from a variety of college majors, religious orientations, and liberal-conservative classifications. Over 14% of the sample were from ethnic minorities (i.e., Hispanic, African-American, and Asian). Women students made up nearly 63% of the sample.

Second, self-report measures often suffer from the underreporting of negative attitudes and behaviors. As a check against giving socially desirable answers, the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale - Form C was administered to all the participants. Bivariate correlation coefficients of the MCSDS with each of the dependent variables (i.e., IAH, ATL, ATG) were very, very small (i.e., -.056, -.006, and -.041, respectively). These results suggest that individuals with higher social desirability scores did not have homophobia scores that were lower than how they actually felt. However, one unique problem with self-report measures looking at homophobia is that for some individuals the "socially desirable response" would be the more homophobic one and for others it would be the more homophilic response. Since there is not a consensus about what type of response is socially desirable, both situations may be occurring and the near zero bivariate correlations may be masking that some are giving exaggerated homophobic responses and some are giving exaggerated homophilic responses.

A third limitation of this study is that the control subjects came from several different sections of the same course

(human sexuality). Ideally, one very large class with the same professor might have been used for both the control and experimental group, however, this may have affected the results by having a panel talk with 160 students at one time rather than 80 students. The level of intimacy among panel members and the audience would have been altered.

There were control no-treatment groups but no alternate treatment groups. This presents a fourth limitation. It is not clear what effect simply being in interaction with the panel members might have impacted the results. One alternative would have been to have the panel present to a control group on an unrelated topic with a similar question-and-answer format.

Although one month follow-up results were gathered for all experimental group participants, a longer period of time would increase the confidence of lasting change as a result of the intervention over time. For example, a six month follow-up would have strengthened confidence in the results. Also, it would have allowed for following any changes in behavior that may take much longer before any effects are noticeable.

Implications

Although the effect sizes for the experimental condition were moderate (i.e., 4.8% from the 2X2 factorial MANOVA results and 13.6% from the repeated measures MANOVA results), this researcher finds them to be important. During a one-hour interactive intervention, self-reported cognitive and affective homophobia levels were reduced. The intervention targeted change in both affective and cognitive homophobia. It appears that there was slightly greater change in affective over cognitive homophobia measures. Also, it is not surprising that there was no change in self-reported willingness to engage in gay-positive behaviors because the behavioral component is the most difficult to change.

The small positive changes in attitudes toward gay and lesbians were maintained over a one month period. It seems

possible that, with continued exposure to positive interactions with gay and lesbian people, what Herek (1986) referred to as the "experiential-schematic attitudes" would continue to become more positive and would generalize to all gay and lesbian people.

Directions for Future Research

Future research efforts could be focused at looking at changes occurring after repeated positive interactions with gay and lesbian people. Since one limited positive interactive contact with gay and lesbian people appears to positively change cognitive and affective levels of homophobia, repeated exposures might impact not only the levels of homophobia but also actual behavior.

Other studies could be developed that examine changes that occur when different sized classes are used (e.g., n=20, n=40, n=80, n=120). Comparing changes at different universities with various levels of initial homophobia (e.g., a less homophobic sample compared to one with higher levels of homophobia) might also be useful.

Other improvements for research in this area would be to use powerful research designs such as the Solomon Four-Group Design, to conduct follow-up studies at six month and one year intervals, to include an alternative treatment group, and to use a variety of measurements to look at levels of cognitive, affective, and behavioral homophobia.

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Table 1

Total Sample and Individual Cell Means and Standard Deviations for the Dependent Variables Using the Posttest Data Only

	Measure						
	TIAHPT		TATLPT		TATGPT		
Cell	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	n
Experimental w/ Pretest	82.20	21.03	26.14	9.47	30.08	10.02	80
Experimental w/o Pretest	86.26	17.47	25.34	9.03	29.80	9.24	80
Control w/ Pretest	92.11	20.31	31.15	10.30	35.78	10.27	80
Control w/o Pretest	87.67	17.07	27.72	9.92	32.40	9.28	80
Total Sample	87.06	19.30	27.60	9.90	32.01	9.96	320

Table 2

2X2 Factorial MANOVA Results for the Solomon Four-Group Posttest Data Only

Effect	lambda	df	Fcalc	p_{CALC}	Effect Size
Experimental Condition	.952	3/314	5.26	.001	4.8%
Pretest Condition	.967	3/314	3.61	.014	3.3%
Two-way Interaction	.987	3/314	1.42	.235	1.3%

Table 3

Discriminant Function Results for Experimental Condition

Variable	Standardized Weights	Structure Coefficients	Squared r_s
TIAH	.531	-.667	.445
TATL	-.104	-.856	.733
TATG	-1.319	-.960	.922

Table 4

Discriminant Function Results for Pretest Condition

Variable	Standardized Weights	Structure Coefficients	Squared r_s
TIAH	1.527	-.027	<.001
TATL	-.834	-.593	.352
TATG	-1.070	-.511	.261

Table 5

Discriminant Function Results for Two-way Experimental Condition by Pretest Condition Interaction

Variable	Standardized Weights	Structure Coefficients	Squared r_s
TIAH	1.373	.962	.925
TATL	-.271	.586	.343
TATG	-.236	.689	.475

Table 6

Individual Cell Means and Standard Deviations for the Dependent Variables for the Pretest and Posttest Data

	Measure						
	TIAH		TATL		TATG		
Cell	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	n
Pretesting							
Experimental w/ Pretest	87.36	18.14	27.37	9.05	31.74	9.57	80
Control w/ Pretest	92.81	18.94	29.84	9.79	35.13	10.33	80
Posttesting							
Experimental w/ Pretest	82.20	21.03	26.14	9.47	30.08	10.02	80
Control w/ Pretest	92.11	20.31	31.15	10.30	35.78	10.27	80

Table 7

Repeated Measures One-Way MANOVA Results

Effect	lambda	df	Fcalc	p_{CALC}	Effect Size
Between Subjects					
Experimental Condition	.864	3/156	8.17	<.001	13.6%
Within Subjects					
Time	.036	3/156	1374.12	<.001	96.4%
Time-by-Experimental Condition Two-way Interaction	.931	3/156	3.86	.011	6.9%

Table 8

Means, Standard Deviations, and 95 Percent Confidence Intervals for PEQPR, PEQPT, and PEQFU for Experimental with Pretest Group

Measure	Mean	SD	n	95% Confidence Interval
PEQPR	32.14	7.60	40	29.71 to 34.57
PEQPT	32.18	7.96	40	29.63 to 34.72
PEQFU	34.55	7.27	40	32.22 to 36.88

Table 9

Means, Standard Deviations, and 95 Percent Confidence Intervals for Posttest and Follow-up Administrations of Homophobia Measures for Total Experimental, Experimental with Pretest, and Experimental without Pretest Groups

Measure	Mean	SD	n	95% CI
Experimental without Pretest				
IAHPT	86.26	17.47	80	82.37 to 90.15
IAHFU	85.47	17.62	80	81.55 to 89.40
TATLPT	25.34	9.03	80	23.33 to 27.35
TATLFU	26.37	9.12	80	24.34 to 28.40
TATGPT	29.80	9.24	80	27.74 to 31.85
TATGFU	31.01	9.44	80	28.91 to 33.11
Experimental with Pretest				
IAHPT	82.20	21.03	80	77.52 to 86.88
IAHFU	83.99	20.24	80	79.49 to 88.50
TATLPT	26.14	9.47	80	24.04 to 28.25
TATLFU	27.06	10.01	80	24.83 to 29.28
TATGPT	30.08	10.02	80	27.85 to 32.31
TATGFU	31.52	10.19	80	29.25 to 33.79
Experimental Group Totals				
IAHPT	84.23	19.38	160	81.20 to 87.25
IAHFU	84.73	18.93	160	81.78 to 87.69
ATLPT	25.74	9.23	160	24.30 to 27.18
ATLFU	26.71	9.55	160	25.22 to 28.20
ATGPT	29.94	9.61	160	28.44 to 31.44
ATGFU	31.26	9.80	160	29.73 to 32.79